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Chap-Book
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THE WOOING OF PENELOPE

AN INCIDENT OF DEPRAVITY IN FIVE ACTS

ETTA DEXTER FIELD

PORTRAIT OF STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ F. VALLOTTON

NOTES

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HYPOTHESES

THE wise men dream and, waking, make us hear
Till slowly their strange fancies draw our faith ;
And so in days remote, bright, hot, and sere
God after god rose but to flee in fear.

PHILIP BECKER GOETZ.

THE SUPERLATIVE IN CRITICISM

IN that fine and incisive essay on "The Literary Influence of Academies" Matthew Arnold, rebuking Macaulay, insists upon the vulgarity of the superlative. It is not only vulgar, he says, but retarding, for the critic to give the rein so readily to complacency, and to affirm with self-satisfaction that his own age, and its literature, stand upon the summit of progress. Without a sense of proportion, a scheme of perspective, criticism (he adds in effect) is dead : its very function lies in preserving us from exaggeration, in helping us to distinguish between the sound and the unsound. That essay was written thirty years ago, but like all literature that is touched by truth it stands good for all time. Especially is it true of the present day ; and many of us, turning those familiar pages from time to time for inspiration, must feel inclined to divert the sentiment of Wordsworth's sonnet into another channel, and to cry with no common sincerity,

"Arnold ! Thou shouldst be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee."

It is difficult, indeed, to conceive any voice that would be more hale and helpful in the arena of English letters to-day than that of Matthew Arnold, any rebuke more needed

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than those which he had ever upon the tip of his tongue for the provinciality of excess, for the *brutalité des journaux anglais*. That pliant lash of witty criticism which he shook so dexterously over the shoulders of Sir Charles Adderly and Mr. Roebuck has long hung idle on the walls of our academe; and yet there was never an hour that had greater need of a master. We have our poets and our novelists, but where is our critic? The mantel of Arnold has fallen upon a barren shore, and there is none to pick it up. And yet the opportunities of criticism just now are great, far greater than they were in the days of Arnold's prime. Never, perhaps, was there so much writing about writing, such a plethora of reviews, and such a demand for occasional papers. Almost every journal, whether metropolitan or provincial, has its literary page, where what passes for criticism is poured out with ceaseless regularity. The fruits of it appear in the press-notices quoted in the publishers' advertisements, and the trail of the superlative is over them all. Really, the gross vulgarity of these advertisements is the reduction to absurdity of the entire system of contemporary reviewing. During the last few years there has scarcely been a single wretched, incompetent novel, put forth by an adventurous amateur, but some generous reviewer has spoken of it in terms of excessive enthusiasm. If ever the motto "Live and Let Live" was carried to its logical conclusion, it is carried thither to-day. Everything is "best," "cleverest," "most suggestive," " frankest," "epoch-making;" there can be no bad books now-a-days. So far one school of criticism, and that the loudest.

As a sort of reaction to all this, however, another school has arisen to take its stand at the farther pole, and to revel in condemnation. Feeling the absurdity of their environment, these wiseacres of revolution divorce themselves from the prevailing custom, betake themselves to the opposite ex-

reme, and pride themselves upon holding all things "worst," "most incompetent," "most ignorant." "It is at least the better course to admire and to condone," says one school: "it is always safest to preserve the judgment, and to discriminate," says the other; and forthwith they proceed, the one to the insanity of praise, the other to the insanity of blame. The tawdry superlative shakes out her vulgar train across both pages alike.

One would think the fallacy of the thing must be apparent upon the face of it. To admire it is not necessary to become obsequious; to insult is not to blame. But there seems to be a current idea that the employment of highly-sounding, richly-coloured words is an evidence of strength, that it is manly to be vulgarly impertinent, magnanimous to "add to golden phrases golden phrases." The thing reminds one of the world of schoolboys. The one set are puny, white-fingered little prigs, who hang about the pavilion to shout whenever the captain of the eleven fields a rolling ball: the other the loud-tongued, blustering bullies, to whom both games and studies are alike (in schoolboy phrase) "rot" and "rubbish." It is all child's play prolonged into manhood: and when no longer childish it grows not only "vulgar," but "retarding." The situation, moreover, is exceedingly hard upon the unfortunate author. At the outset, the enthusiasts, scavenging for new material, seize upon his books and laud and magnify them into a lively sale: then he begins to think, good, easy man, his greatness is a-ripening, and his future assured. Suddenly, with a howl and a clatter, up come the pessimists, who have hitherto left him to his own devices. In an instant their pens are spluttering, and a dozen journals pronounce the unpretentious novelist an imposter, a blackleg, an impotent charlatan. The public, always floundering after the latest impression, begins to believe it has been taken in; and the harmless

author, whose work was never very good nor very bad, who deserved as well as most and better than some, suddenly finds his little hour of popularity at an end, his occupation gone. This paper shall contain no names, for personality is as vulgar as ill-judgment; but every reader will at once recall a dozen instances of the kind we indicate, and will appreciate the injustice that is done alike to the author and to his audience.

To a great extent the modern editor is responsible for the situation. In the rush of daily journalism, where half a hundred papers must please to live, the temptation to be smart and sensational is undoubtedly insistent. Just as political reports and the loathsome stories of the law courts must, to catch the popular taste, be wrought in with splashes of brilliant colour, so, too, the literary criticism must, it is supposed, deal in flashy effects, lampblack and lightning. Nevertheless, in this the editor underrates his public. From perpetually pronouncing, with Carlyle, that his clients are mostly fools, the editor comes at last to cater for fools alone. By far the larger proportion of those who are sincerely interested in literary movements has wit enough to see that it is being merely hoodwinked and insulted by the incessant superlative. As a rule the reputations that have been made and marred by newspaper comments have never reached the higher class of readers at all. These are slower to believe, and harder to change, when once they have believed. After a few disappointments, born of hopes engendered by eulogy, after a few discoveries of the injustice of condemnation, they cease to read the offending papers at all, and turn to others in which they find more discernment and greater impartiality. The sequel is the death of the journal,—a thing of almost monthly occurrence in the history of the modern press. The editor, therefore, has greater responsibility, for the tone which he sets must needs be the tone of his follow-

ers, and there is abundant room just now for a sane and honest school of editorship. Literary academies and the like may have, indeed must have, their influence, but their very establishment is a matter of machinery which requires both time and organization. And, indeed, at the moment, organization is the one thing most lacking to English literature: we have arrived at a pass where every one does what is good in his own eyes, where the air is full of a foolish individualism, and it would take length of time and labour to set a central authority upon its throne. The case for the editor is easier. New journals spring into existence every day, journals for the interest of sport, of commercialism, of petty prattle, of scandal and of indecency. They have their reward. But may we not hope for a journal launched in the cause of the sane and helpful judgment, a journal which shall eschew partiality, espouse honour, and cast to the four winds of heaven the unconsidered, the superfluous superlative? The man who will start such a journal, and edit it with sincere consistency, will be handing on to posterity that fire of true criticism, which has faltered and all but faded in inaction since Matthew Arnold died.

ARTHUR WAUGH.

THE FOUNDLING

FOUND on the step." The raindrops blur;
This is the place. Oh! In the door—
'T is he!—This once, considerate sir,
And I shall trouble you no more.

Lead on, fear not; my lips are shut,
And well-looped skirts will leave no stain.
Say to the lady I am but
A curious woman, caught—in the rain—

The mother !—Madame, I entreat you
Forgive a victim of—the shower ;
Out of the storm fain would she greet you,
And after you, the wee wind-flower.

You play the mother well, believe me,
Fair as the babe herself is fair ;
Though you have not—do they deceive me ?—
Quite those deep eyes, that brow, that hair.

More like my own ? (How kind words scatter
One's thoughts ! and ans'ring is an art.)
Pray, tell her so—a trifling matter—
And let her wear this next her heart.

She smiles toward me.—Peace, gentle woman,
I shall grow better in the air.—
Tell her a fair girl, lost but human,
Asked that she wear the trinket there.

JOHN VANCE CHENEY.

THE WOOING OF PENELOPE

AN INCIDENT OF DEPRAVITY IN FIVE ACTS

(A SHADOW PANTOMIME.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MR. SMITH, a solid man of business.

MRS. SMITH, a woman in a thousand.

PENELOPE, a sweet girl.

PLATO, a "college man."

BOBBIE, an abandoned small boy.

OLD NICK, Bobbie's friend and patron.

SCENE, any college town.

PROLOGUE.



IST to the tale I'm about to tell,
Of a lovely maid and a howling swell;
And the cruel adventures which them befel.

I trust you will say I have told it well.

The maid was a beauty of great renown
In an upper-ten part of an upper-ten town;
Her face was a dream, and so was her gown;—
You may see for yourself and note them down.

*(The lovely maid appears in the shadow and exhibits
her many charms.)*

The name of the maid I'll reveal forthwith.
'T is a name suggestive of strength and pith;
I'm sure you will say it is not a myth:
Penelope Jane Angelica Smith.

(The lovely maid vanishes.)

The howling swell was a college man,
Built on a rare and expensive plan;
The girls, as he passed, to the windows ran,
And sighed as only the dear girls can.
Now he looked this way when the trouble began.

*(The eyes of the spectators are allowed to feast on the
howling swell.)*

The name of this swell, I forgot to state,
Was Plato Augustus, surnamed the Great;
As the custom ran to abbreviate,
He was known in college as simply Plate;
For such is the queer caprice of fate.

*(The howling swell disappears, and the father is
shown in his manly strength.)*

This is the father whom next I show,
The head of the firm of Smith & Co.

And you will find, wherever you go,
That his check is good for a million or so ;
A pretty soft snap for Penelope's beau ;
That is, if he happened to suit, you know.

*(The father retires and the mother makes her courtesy
to the admiring public.)*

There is the mother, a woman rare ;
Of the burdens of life she assumed her share ;
Of the house of Smith she had special care ;
But had always a moment or two to spare
In a neighborly way, if wanted there.
And while I admit it is hardly fair
To lay these family secrets bare,
I am forced to say that old Smith *père*
Was often a little the worse for wear,
After a tiff, in the way of hair.
And as for Penelope's beaux, I swear
I have frequently heard the boys declare
Not one of the crowd would ever dare
To enter the room and sit in a chair,
Under her spectacle's awful glare,
Which ill-concealed her stony stare,
And added much to her austere air ;
While poor Penelope wondered where
They could go to escape from old Smith *mère*.

*(The mother majestically fades away and Bobbie comes
upon the scene.)*

This is the brother, a little boy,
Whose presence at times was wont to cloy ;
For he always felt the keenest joy
In juvenile purposes to annoy.
And when Penelope was most coy,
His fiendish arts he would employ,

And her and her beau's chagrin enjoy.

(*Bobbie is withdrawn.*)

This is our prologue, then, in this

You see our *personæ dramatis*.

If anything you may take amiss,

Please have the politeness not to hiss.

I know I shall show the dire abyss,

Into which poor Plato was hurled from bliss,

From venturing near a precipice ;—

The awful end of an ill-timed kiss.

ACT I.

The Kiss.

SCENE, *the Smith family seated in the drawing-room. Pa Smith is reading the evening paper. Mother Smith is remonstrating with Bobbie, who is performing in the manner peculiar to his youth. Penelope is reading a book. Plato is ushered in.*

In the family circle Penelope sat ;

Her heart went rapidly pittity-pat ;

And a very good cause there was for that,

For Plato had entered the room, whereat

The old man thoughtfully reached for his hat,

And on persuasion the small boy gat

Up stairs with his Ma for a family spat,

And such diversion as comes with a slat.

(*The family retire, as indicated, leaving Penelope alone with Plato.*)

Young Plato was tickled to death to find

Penelope's folks so uncommonly kind ;

And he said to himself: "It 's a regular grind

On the rest of the fellows ;—but why should I mind ?

For some time past I have opined,
That to me Penelope's half inclined,
While the family seem to be resigned,
As all can see, if they are not blind."
And he smoothed himself before and behind,
With the air of a man who has dined and wined.

(Plato greets Penelope, and expresses his satisfaction.)

These thoughts went through Penelope's head,
And all to herself she communed and said :
"If ever I am induced to wed,
Or into a summer engagement led,
'T will be when Plato allays my dread,
And gives me comfort and hope instead,
With his college wisdom and air high-bred."
Then a maidenly blush o'er her features spread,
And a lustrous smile round the room she shed,
Which, in college parlance, got Plato "dead."

(Penelope modestly acknowledges Plato's greeting with an entrancing smile.)

When Plato had taken a proffered seat,
And fully composed his hands and feet,
He remarked that Penelope looked quite sweet ;
Which, by way of a starter, was certainly neat.

(Plato compliments Penelope.)

Thereat Penelope fain did blush ;
For a minute or two fell an awkward hush ;
Which assured the youth at the very first flush,
He had made what in college is called a "crush."

(Penelope blushing acknowledges the compliment.)

Then close to the maiden he drew his chair,
So close in fact that I must declare
There was precious small room, if any, to spare ;

And this, I am told by the girls, is where
They came to regard him so *débonnaire*.

(*Plato draws a chair close to Penelope.*)

They talked for a while as young folk should ;
And Plato, as only Plato could,
Explained what in college is understood
By the True, the Beautiful, and the Good.

(*Plato discourses on the T. B. and G.*)

He talked so wisely, this college man,
That she, as only a sweet girl can,
Peeped shyly at him behind her fan,
And wondered was ever on such a plan
Another man made since the world began.

(*Penelope coyly admires Plato.*)

Then, quite unconscious, you understand,
He caught in his own the fair girl's hand ;
For he had plenty at his command,
Of what in college is known as "sand."

(*Plato ensnares the hand of Penelope.*)

Of course she blushed, and at first essayed
To withdraw her hand, like a modest maid ;
Not that she was in the least afraid,
Or wished for a moment to upbraid ;
But because she wanted the rules obeyed,
Never in college to skip a grade.

(*Penelope modestly endeavors to disengage her hand.*)

But Plato was too intent to see
A fact so apparent to you and me ;
With eloquent gesture and fancy free,
He warmed to his ardent task, while she,
With looks as loving as looks can be,
By way of encouragement, said, "tee-hee!"

Not much of a speech you will agree,
But a sign of assent from a bargaineer.

*(Plato makes many demonstrations of affection, while
Penelope modestly giggles.)*

And so it happened with proper haste,
Young Plato's arm stole 'round her waist;
A stroke in tennis they call well placed,
And on rational expectation based.

(Plato embraces Penelope.)

Penelope smiled, and a sweet surprise
Stole into her blue confiding eyes;
And she said to herself: "If this youth applies
His mind to his books and what in them lies
In this vigorous way, no wonder he's wise."
Then she heaved a few contented sighs,
And leaned on his bosom and asked no whys.

(Penelope rests her head on Plato's shoulder.)

Thus Plato sailed on a sea of bliss,
And he said to his heart: "What's the matter with this?"
Which is college for saying there's naught amiss.
But here's where they stood near a deep abyss;
For he went too far, and purloined a kiss.

(Plato kisses Penelope with a resounding smack.)

ACT II.

The Explosion.

SCENE I.

Now it chanced that the boy, who, I have said,
Had been sent to the chamber overhead,
And carefully tucked in his nice warm bed,
Was into a scheme of villainy led
By depraved Old Nick, whom we all should dread.

(Bobbie is revealed in his nice bed.)

And plotting revenge on his sister's beau,
As the reason why he had been treated so,
Before the time when he aught to go ;
He made up his mind that he 'd quietly show
The danger of making a boy your foe.

(Bobbie plans a fearful revenge for his banishment.)

So out of his nice warm bed he crept,
And over the floor he softly stepped ;
One eye on his mother's room he kept,
For he knew, this rascally young adept,
That if she surmised that he had not slept,
His plans she would certainly intercept.

(Bobbie departs on his mission of vengeance.)

And he recalled with ghoulisn glee,
And side remarks of malignites,
That among his treasures there ought to be
A suitable joke on his enemee,
Prepared by the heathenish Chineee,
For just such times of emergences.

(Bobbie provides himself with a fire-cracker.)

SCENE 2.

Still stepping softly he stole down stairs ;
And he laughed when he saw the close-drawn chairs,
And the critical state of love's affairs.
He thought of his Ma and the shoe she wears,
But he said like a boy of spunk : " Who cares ! "

(Bobbie approaches the enemy.)

SCENE 3.

Now Plato was busy, as you have learned ;
The fire of love in his bosom burned ;
And still for another kiss he yearned
From the lovely mouth to his own upturned.

And this is why he had not discerned
That the boy from his bed-room had adjourned.

*(Plato, intent on other business, is unconscious of the
advance of the enemy.)*

Penelope, too, was quite intent
To know exactly what Plato meant ;
Although the evening was well-nigh spent,
And she knew it was time that the young man went,
To the matter in hand her mind she bent,
And such assiduous heed she lent,
And gave such gratified assent
To each osculatory incident,
That she did not think it pertinent
To provide against a dire event.

(Penelope is likewise distracted by more pressing affairs.)

So into the room the demon came ;—
Bobbie, in fact, was his other name ;—
And gleefully he surveyed his game,
And prepared to annihilate the same.
I say it with proper sense of shame.

(The enemy enters.)

Plato, you see, had reached that state,
Which grows in warmth as the hour grows late ;
And all unconscious of their fate,
And the fierce revenge which the boy would sate,
The lovers sat. Said he : " It's great ! "
" I'm glad you like it," said she to Plate.
But she said to herself : " At the present rate,
I shall not have a very long time to wait,
For in college slang he has 'struck his gait' ;
Though I'm bound to explain that slang I hate."

(The lovers commune more closely.)



PORTRAIT OF STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

F. VALLOTTON

Crawling slowly to Plato's chair,
Bobbie grinned at the luckless pair.
You have not a moment, young man, to spare.
Fly for your life ! go anywhere !
Vain my entreaty and vain my prayer ;
Who thinks of danger in love's affair ?

(The enemy cautiously advances.)

Under the chair he placed a pail,
And in it his weapon ;—pray heaven he fail !
Though such result would have spoiled my tale,
And also a very good rhyme in "ail."
'T is Nick against Cupid ;—now which will quail ?

(The enemy gets his batteries in position.)

I pray you all who have heard this lay,
Fearfully turn your heads away ;
For I 've come to the point where I must say,
That those, for whom firing spoils a play,
And who wish to leave the audience, may ;
For each small boy must have his day,
Or rather his night ;—so go or stay.

(The enemy intimates his plan of operations, and suspends hostilities till non-combatants can retire.)

The bird in the lovers' hearts still sang,
But was soon to feel the serpent's fang ;
For a loud report through the chamber rang,
And the weapon went off with a dreadful bang.
High in the air young Plato sprang !

(The enemy having placed the fire-cracker in the pail, applies the match and the explosion follows.)

While we have seen young Plato soar,
And the wicked Bobbie sneak through the door,
Penelope lay upon the floor,

Pale and presumably drenched in gore.
Of what further trials are in store,
Worse than those which have gone before,
In a subsequent act I shall tell you more.

(Penelope faints, Plato is panic stricken, and Bobbie runs away unperceived.)

ACT III.

The Scrimmage.

The old Dutch clock was striking ten,
And Pa from the club returning, when
The trouble occurred which inspires my pen.
Ah! there was a scene of tumult then;
A scene to appall the stoutest men;—
I fear to recall that scene again.

Into the room Pa came in haste;
And down the stairs Ma madly chased;
And Bobbie from his bed-room raced;
And all the frightened Plato faced.

(Plato is confronted by Penelope's alarmed and indignant family.)

All still and pale Penelope lay;
While the youth was much too scared to say
How she happened to be in this dreadful way.
But the smell of powder seemed to betray
The deplorable fact as plain as day,
That a tragedy was *un accompli fait*.

(The horror-stricken family discovers Penelope apparently cold in death.)

"My child! my murdered child!" Ma cried,
And threw herself down by Penelope's side;
While Pa, who was corpulent, vainly tried

To catch the youth, who, with arms stretched wide,
Called on his fair and promised bride,
If she had not really and truly died,
To arise and the facts in the case confide

(General perturbation over Penelope's condition.)

But Plato had reason for dire complaint;
For Penelope was in a very bad faint;
And in no situation to acquaint
Her folks with the horrors I've tried to paint.

(Penelope remains oblivious to the tumult.)

So Plato, perceiving his chance was small
To get out at once, if he got out at all,
Made a sudden, undignified break for the hall.
And, indeed, he had a very close call;
For Bobbie contrived, as you see, to crawl
And grab his legs as they do in ball,
When they try to precipitate a fall.
And the old man stood like a Chinese wall.
Then they all mixed up in a fearful brawl,
Or what might be better termed, a sprawl.

(Pa and Bobbie intercept Plato.)

Short is the tale I have now to tell;
For Plato played football and played it well;
Indeed as a tackle he did excell,
And so, opportunely, it befell
That he just gave vent to his college yell,
And into the scrimmage he went pell mell.

(Plato mixes up with Pa and Bobbie.)

Now you shall see that this act is done.
The battle is over, the game is won.
Pa is still with us, and so is the son;
But Plato,—well, Plato is making the run.

As they say in college, "he took the bun."

(Plato downs Pa and Bobbie, and escapes.)

Penelope's eyes have opened wide,
But instead of her Plato there by her side,
The ample form of her Ma she spied.
And then, as she heard her parents chide
The youth of her heart, this promised bride
Did what she ought to do ;—she cried.

(Penelope comes to and weeps copiously.)

ACT IV.

Reparation.

Two years have passed, and now you shall see,
If you care to follow this tale with me,
That Plato had taken his first degree,
And in place of the Great he wrote A. B.
With a very good prospect of LL. D.

(Plato appears as an honor man.)

Penelope, too, has grown in grace ;
Trim was her figure and fair her face ;
And on her features was left no trace
Of the awful scene which you saw take place.
And with her beauty her mind kept pace ;
A notable fact in a very rare case.

(Penelope is revealed in the charm of womanhood.)

For it seems that the story of Bobbie's crime
Had all leaked out in the course of time.
And Bobbie had gone to an unknown clime ;
But that will be told in a subsequent rhyme.

And Pa to Plato regrets had sent ;
And Ma to her daughter's beau unbent ;

While much of the young man's time was spent
At the Smith's, which was cheaper than paying rent.
And the neighbors said that all this meant
There would be a wedding soon after Lent.

(Pa and Ma express a preference for Plato.)

And right they were, for the people say
The sun danced merrily Easter day;
And Plato came to the Smith's to stay,
While Penelope swore to love and obey,
As all girls do when they go that way.

*(Plato and Penelope are married, while Pa, making
too merry, is rebuked by Ma.)*

And ever thereafter naught amiss
Came to disturb their dream of bliss.
So that now you may happily see that this
Was a very good end of a very small kiss.

*(Plato and Penelope renew their pledges of affection
without fear of interruption.)*

ACT V.

Retribution.

"But what of Bobbie?" I hear you cry;
"Did he come to a wicked end, and why?"
Listen to me, for I shall try
To tell you how Bobbie was forced to hie
At the dead of night to the By-and-by.
The reason you may yourselves apply.

When Bobbie had gone to his bed that night,
He chuckled with glee at Plato's plight,
At his father's wrath and his sister's fright;
And his mother's grief was his chief delight.
While to add to his sins already at height,

He forgot his prayers ;—which you know 's not right.

(Bobbie in his nice warm bed chuckles over the misery he has caused.)

At twelve, when the house was dark and still,

Bobbie awoke with a singular thrill ;

And he said to himself : " After all, it will

Not surprise me if I am in for a chill."

(Bobbie experiences the symptoms of a chill.)

Then out from the clothes he popped his head,

And there he saw right close to his bed,

An awful creature, all dressed in red,

With horns and a tail, who presently said :

" Come, Bobbie, come," in a tone well-bred.

(Bobbie spies Old Nick at his bedside.)

Under the clothes he vanished quick ;

For he knew at once 't was his friend, Old Nick ;

With whom he always had been quite thick ;

But this was a different kind of trick.

(Bobbie hides under the bed-clothes.)

But busy Old Nick had no time to waste ;

He yanked the clothes from the bed in haste ;

And 'round the chamber poor Bobbie raced,

While Nick with a grin his victim chased.

(Old Nick pursues Bobbie around the room.)

Then Bobbie fell on his knees, they say,

And begged for a minute or two to pray ;

But Old Nick laughed and he said : " Nay, nay ;

I do n't do business in any such way ;

It 's too late, Bobbie ; you 've had your day."

(Bobbie vainly implores Old Nick for a little time.)

So off poor Bobbie was hauled in fright,

Out in the dark and lonesome night ;

But where they went I am not quite
 Prepared to say, though I think it right
 To assume that the place was a mighty long sight
 Worse than the one where they first took flight.

*(Old Nick drags Bobbie out into the darkness, while a
 thunder storm is raging.)*

And I happen to know that Old Nick took care
 That when Ma called Bobbie no Bobbie was there.
 She looked in the bed and she looked on the stair;
 And she searched through the closet and peeped everywhere.
 And when she at last gave up in despair,
 She found this letter pinned back of a chair.

*(Ma hunts vainly for Bobbie and finds a mysterious
 letter on the chair.)*

"My dear Mrs. Smith: I am grieved to convey
 The tidings that Bobbie has gone away.

'T is possible he may come back some day;

But the chances are he has gone to stay.

Yours, Old Nick.—P. S.—Please say

To the children, 'be careful what tricks you play.' "

*(Ma reads Old Nick's letter, and is much affected
 thereat.)*

THE END.

ETTA DEXTER FIELD.

NOTES

¶ A writer usually makes his title an advertisement of his wares; consequently Mr. Zangwill's caption, "Without Prejudice," seems to imply a belief that to be "without prejudice" is desirable. It may be or it may not be. At any rate what Mr. Zangwill thinks is another question. One cannot so easily make words and meanings interchangeable, while with a man so young, so clever, and so modern,

one may always suspect that English is used as a cipher.

Prejudice is, I believe, an unfavorable judgment, unsupported by knowledge. Prejudice, then, which knowledge could only support—a just prejudice, in short—approaches the sublimity of inspiration. What can be finer than to know one's pet dislikes without knowing anything of the things disliked; to condemn the books one could never stomach without the pangs of reading them? Such a prejudice is an attainment, a proof of the sureness of our instincts, the untainted blood in our veins. One may be prouder to condemn the novels of Miss Marie Corelli without warrant, than to love the poems of Mr. George Meredith with reason.

Other prejudices, unjust ones, which knowledge might prove false, have also great advantages, in that they may be demolished by the young. The superfluous energy of youth is bound to be spent somewhere, and if there be no narrowmindedness among the elders it will fritter itself away.

Vigorous and bigoted national prejudices we sadly lack. Broadmindedness has ceased to be a virtue, and become a habit. It indicates no vitality of thought, but rather the lethargy of a "*laissez faire*" attitude towards literature. I mean that Cosmopolis is grown too cosmopolitan, and that we are losing all feeling for the remote, the foreign, the picturesque. We accept everything, and the welcome of Zola, Ibsen, Tolstoy, and, for aught I know, of the newest Chinese minor poet, is a mere incident of the passing of the sun from east to west. True, the fact that the last gentleman eats for breakfast a quite unspeakable salad, might impress us, but that there was anything in his verses racy of the Chinese soil, would fail to move us. The wonderful, the strange, is slowly disappearing from our world.

So convinced am I of this that if no real prejudice is at hand I believe we should raise a phantasm. A few years

ago Mr. Hamlin Garland assaulted, with sledge-hammer blows, an alleged prejudice against western literature. This cooled Mr. Garland's blood, I doubt not. But now, in the twilight of the battle,—seriously, was there a prejudice, was there even literature? Yet such was the power of the wraith of prejudice exorcised by Mr. G's incantations in magazine columns, that the west was roused to work for something really worthy.

A while ago I tried something of the sort myself. Among my intimates I endeavored to institute the cult of the Alaskan drama. But alas, there was no bitterness against it; worse still, it did not exist! I lacked Mr. Garland's power, Alaska is still dumb; yet I think my case very like his.

Opposition is evidently the forerunner of recognition, and the stupidity necessary to a healthy prejudice against imported literature we might well endure. Indeed the great foreigners are worth a few victims slain in their defence. Standards of appreciation do not descend like the gentle dew from heaven, but are fought for. Controversy means thought, and even poor thought is better than none at all.

BOOKS RECEIVED

FLOTTILLE DANS LE GOLFE: BY HENRI MAZEL. Paris: Bibliothèque Artistique et Littéraire.

THE EVERGREEN: A Northern Seasonal: Published in the Lawnmarket in Edinburgh by Patrick Geddes & Colleagues. Imported by J. B. Lippincott Co.

THE MASTER KNOT AND "ANOTHER STORY": BY CONOVER DUFF. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

THE NEW MOON: BY C. E. RAIMOND. 12mo. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

CHIFFON'S MARRIAGE: BY GVP: Translated by Mrs. Edward Lees Coffey. New York: Hurst & Co.

FOOTBALL AND LOVE: BY BURR W. MCINTOSH. New York: The Transatlantic Publishing Co.

KAFIR STORIES: BY W. CHARLES SCULLEY. New York: Henry Holt & Co.



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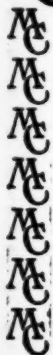




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